

TO: Senate Agriculture and Bioeconomy Committee Members
Senate Agriculture Appropriations Committee Members

RE: Executive Order No. 2009-45

It was my pleasure to serve as a member of the Ag Commission from 2005 into 2009. It was a special appointment for me because I did not seek the position, but was asked to consider the appointment because of my involvement in many agricultural areas. I was appreciative because I was appointed based on my abilities and not as a political pay back or a thank you for a contribution. I do not know the Governor nor am I very political. Because the Governor had to go outside of the party to fill the position, it meant that a wider perspective and insight on issues was brought in. In my opinion, that is one thing that makes the Commission oversight of the Department and the MDA Director successful and unique. Because the Commission is bipartisan by Constitutional requirement, there is much more effort put into working through problems to good resolution instead of pitting one party's philosophy against the other.

With that as a back drop, it is all the more disconcerting that the Governor is attempting to do away with the power of the Commission and its ability to appoint the Director with this Executive Order. I truly believe this system should be emulated by other departments instead of reverting back to the antiquated and suspect political appointment/political favor process. Governors in the past have always made their wishes known about who they would like to see as MDA Director, and the Commission has nearly always (but not always) gone along.

Because of my tenure on the Commission, I have witnessed the present system in action and am convinced of its effectiveness because of these points: accountability to the Commission by the Director and not the governor takes some of the political whims out, the close connection to the agricultural community through the Commission to the Department leads to good feedback and decisions, and the open and up front bipartisan nature of the decision making process helped by public comment at Commission meetings produces good policy. It is a wonderful example of government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Please do not throw out this longstanding and effective system by letting the Executive Order stand. It must be overturned.

Dale Norton
Ag Commissioner, 2005-2009